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AUTHOR de los Santos, Alfredo G., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the literature on community college education has included little material on instructional quality in these institutions. This absence of a discussion of quality teaching indicates a serious weakness in community college education that could be remedied by taking some lessons from the corporate sector. Three characteristics have been found to contribute significantly to the success of major corporations: (1) concern for the needs of their customers; (2) productivity through people, that is, treating people as adults and partners, with respect and dignity; and (3) being driven by a set of fundamental values or beliefs. Applying these characteristics to community colleges would require an analysis of the composition of the student population and their needs, with special attention to the needs of women, minority, part-time, and older students; a definition of quality in terms of student needs; greater concern for the well-being of faculty; and the development of programs and services within the guidelines of an overarching set of beliefs guiding the activities of the institution. Though some may feel that the colleges are too far along in their development to instill a new corporate value, the goal of making excellence in teaching the predominant value in the community college can and must be adopted. (HB)

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Excellent Teaching: The Need for a Corporate Value
or
The Need to Add a Third C in Community College Teaching

by

Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr.
Vice Chancellor for Educational Development
Maricopa Community Colleges
Phoenix, Arizona

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EXCELLENT TEACHING: THE NEED FOR A CORPORATE VALUE

OR

THE NEED TO ADD A THIRD C IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE TEACHING

by

Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr.

We need to add a new "C" to the term community college teaching. I prefer the letter C because it is the first letter in the word CALIDAD which means quality in Spanish. We need to make quality teaching in the community college THE corporate value of the community college.

Today I am going to try to answer three far-reaching, significant, over-arching questions related to my topic. The first one is: What does a spindly-legged, hairless Chihuahua dog have to do with calidad in community college teaching? You don't think I am serious, do you?. The second question is: What should a bar of Ivory Soap, a pair of Gold Toe socks, and an IBM personal computer have in common with teaching excellence in the community college? And the third question is: What the hell does si se puede mean anyway?

But before I try to answer those questions, I am going to tell you a little story. My friends from El Paso have heard me tell this story over and over again. It is a true story; it happened when I was living in El Paso. I lived in the east section of town, in an area that at that time was fairly isolated from the rest of the city because El Paso was growing east. They were building apartments very, very fast and a young couple who lived in the apartment complex about four or five blocks from my house had the experience of having their apartment burglarized. And they added a new lock, one of

those chain things that you add, and they thought they were safe. However, a couple of weeks later the apartment was burglarized again.

This time they decided to add some rod iron bars to the windows and to add an alarm system to the apartment. They thought they were safe but again the apartment was burglarized. They decided to take some very drastic measures. They decided that they would buy themselves a watchdog. So they decided that the young man in the family would go to a pet shop and buy a large, mean-looking watchdog. The man did so on his way home from work in the afternoon.

He walked into a pet shop and said, "I want to buy a large, mean-looking watchdog." The clerk said, "I am sorry. We just ran out of those dogs. Everybody in that apartment complex has bought them. However, I do have this little Chihuahua dog." (For those of you who don't know, Chihuahua dogs are about 10 inches high, they are spindly-legged, most of them don't have any hair, they have a head about the size of my fist, and they tremble.)

The young man says, "I'm sorry but you don't understand. My apartment has been burglarized three times. I want a large, mean-looking watchdog." The clerk says, "I'm sorry but it is you who doesn't understand. You see this is a Karate Dog."

The young man says, "A Karate Dog, what do you mean?"

"Well, let me show you."

So he reaches under the counter, and puts on the counter two concrete blocks on top of which he puts about an 18 inch long two-by-four piece of wood. And he says, "Karate Dog, karate the two-by-four."

The little dog goes grrrr and splinters the two-by-four. The young man says, "Do it again." So again the clerk reaches under the counter pulls out another 18 inch long two-by-four and says, "Karate Dog, karate the

two-by-four." The little dog goes grrrr and just splinters the two-by-four.

The young man says, "I'll take it." So he pays the clerk and puts the little dog into his coat pocket and walks home. He gets home and his wife asks, "Where is the large, mean-looking watchdog?" He says, "They were out, so I bought this little Chihuahua dog," and he puts him on the floor. The lady says, "My God! What are you doing? Throwing our money away? I told you to buy a large, mean-looking watchdog."

The man says, "You don't understand, dear; this is a Karate dog." The lady says, "Karate dog, karate my foot." (Actually the lady said another part of her anatomy and if she were here today she probably would be standing.)

Back to more serious kinds of things. I don't think I need to remind you that for the last three to four years we have been, as a country, preoccupied with the lack of calidad in our educational system. We have been inundated by a number of reports that talk about the lack of quality in our educational system. I am sure all of you have heard of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the report A Nation at Risk; the College Board has published its Academic Preparation for College; Ernest Boyer recently published The High School: A Report on Secondary Eduation in America; and many more. (1) I have a stack next to my bed of about nine reports, twenty-two to twenty-three inches worth of reports, and I have been reviewing them to see what impact they would have on community colleges.

Two or three things impressed me about those reports. One is that very few of them talk about teaching and teachers, and only one of them talks about the need for us to improve the calidad of our teaching. The ones that do talk about teachers and teaching talk about the need for merit pay, the need for improvement of work environment, etc. But only one of them addresses the issue of the need for us to improve the quality of teaching. The other thing

that impressed me is how negative the reports are. They don't talk at all about the good things that are happening in our educational system. But we all know that there are excellent programs in the high schools even though we don't hear about them. The ones we do hear about usually come into the media as a result of something negative.

My favorite example of that is what I refer to as the Garfield High School incident. Garfield High School is a high school in East Los Angeles where about 95% of the students are Chicano. About seven years ago they hired a new principal who decided that he was going to improve the quality of instruction in that high school. The improvement was so dramatic that they prepared students so well that a very large percentage of them went on to college. In fact, they were so successful that the College Board went into that institution and they started their Advanced Placement Program, which is a very high level academic preparation program. The students who take that course have to take an exam and if they achieve at a certain level, with five being the highest level, then those students do not need to take the lower level courses. They don't need to take college algebra, college geometry; they begin in calculus and above.

Well, there was a class about two years ago where about 15 students were taking Advanced Placement Calculus and they did so well on the Advanced Placement Test that Educational Testing Service could not believe that 15 Chicano students in East Los Angeles could have scores of fives and fours across the group. So they forced the students to retake the test and that story hit the press when the community objected. I was then a trustee of Educational Testing Service and I wrote a letter to the Editor of the Arizona Republic, which is the largest newspaper in the state of Arizona, in reaction to a newspaper editorial they had published about the fact that they (the

editors of newspaper) thought that ETS had discriminated against the Chicano students in Garfield High School. I want to read that letter to you now. It is printed under the headline, Si Se Puede.

Editor:

I am writing in response to the editorial "Somebody Flunked," both as an interested Chicano educator and a former trustee of Educational Testing Service.

Your editorial castigated ETS for asking 14 Chicanos at Garfield High School in East Los Angeles to retake the advanced placement test because "they're Hispanics from a rough part of town."

I commend you very highly for the strong stance you took against discrimination, a significant position. (And in Arizona that is very significant, let me tell you.) However, what is most significant to me about this incident is not that the Chicano students had to retake the examination but that they did so well--not once, but twice.

In effect, Jaime Escalante (that is the name of the calculus teacher) is a competent, sympathetic teacher, who has high expectations of his students, believes they can learn, insists on the highest standards, and then works very hard to motivate and teach his students, even to the extent of having Saturday morning classes.

This proves what many of us who have worked hard at improving the quality of education for Chicanos--for all students--have said for a long time: "Si Se Puede."

Now I tell you that because in that letter I tend to define what excellent teaching is. And I want you to remember that.

To move from the high school preparation to community college education...we, too, have been preoccupied with the lack of calidad in our teaching. I am sure that you have read the articles by Bob McCabe from Miami-Dade Community College, Dorothy Knoell from the California Postsecondary Education Commission, Pat Cross, and others who have written about the need for us to improve the quality of instruction in the community colleges. (2)

That preoccupation with the lack of calidad has moved from our own walls to the legislatures. In fact, at least two states that I know of require a mandatory test. New Jersey has a basic skills test that all students who want to go to community colleges have to take. Florida has the CLASP test. This is for students who go to the community college and want to transfer to the unversity. In order for a student to go from the community college to the university, the student has to complete that test and achieve on a certain level. I was talking to the people from Miami-Dade Community College at a meeting a couple of weeks ago and they told me that the cut-off scores are being increased every year. Now if the legislature mandates that kind of testing then they too are preoccupied with the lack of quality in community colleges.

At one time community colleges used to be very proud of the quality of the teaching; at one time we were proud of the calidad of our product. But somehow we have forgotten to emphasize it the last ten to fifteen years.

In preparation for this presentation this morning, I had an ERIC search done of literature in the ERIC system since it was created in 1966. We used the following descriptors: quality teaching, effective teaching, community

colleges, and higher education. Do you know how many "hits" we got?, how many articles we got from 1966 to 1980?

Two! Two articles in the whole ERIC system that where pulled up as a result of that search, using those descriptors.

The first one, in 1978, discussed the need for improving teaching of basic skills, composition, reading, and literature in freshman community college Courses. (3) The second one, also in 1978, discussed the need to provide part-time instructors with more orientation, evaluation, and formalized instructional support system. (4)

But beyond that...nothing.

I looked at the latest books, the Art Cohen and Florence Brawer book, the George Vaughn book, the Richardson book, the Breneman-Nelson book, not a hint of the need for us to improve quality teaching. (5)

We have to go back to Koos, Eells, Johnson, and others to find mention about the need for us to improve the quality of teaching in the community colleges. (6)

In preparation for this meeting, I read an article that Juanito de los Roueche wrote and, as usual, he makes the point that I am trying to make now much better and I would like to quote now a couple paragraphs from the article. This is John Roueche talking: (7)

> "When I first entered the community college field two decades ago, there was great pride in quality of teaching in our classrooms. We knew that students performed as well after transferring to a senior institution as they had in a community college. Given that many of these students were academically ineligible to attend this senior institution as

> freshmen, we concluded that community college teaching MUST be superior to prepare less qualified students for academic success in traditional institutions.
>
> We also took pride in the fact that community colleges had institutional focus on and commitment to teaching excellence. Unlike universities, we were not seeking researchers or scholars, in the traditional sense. We recruited and employed faculty who wanted to teach, individuals who were excited by and committed to teaching."

I guess what I am trying to say is that we have not written and we have not talked about excellence in community college teaching for a long time. It is only recently--1982-83--that we picked up two or three articles about the topic. I tell you that to make the point that I just did and also to tell you that if one needs to talk about excellence in community colleges (and not only the community colleges but higher education), as usual, one has to go the body of literature outside of higher education and community colleges; and, in fact, that is what I have just done.

The book that I am sure a lot of you have read by Peters and Waterman, In Search of Excellence, is a report of a research study (an extended research study) of sixty-two excellent corporations in this country...corporations such as IBM, Frito-lay, McDonalds, Digital, etc. In the book Peters and Waterman describe eight qualities or characteristics of excellent corporations. (8) I would like to discuss three of those, three characteristics that I think are significant and important to us here in Austin, Texas, discussing calidad in teaching in community colleges. The three are: (1) Close to the customer - I call it obsession with our students, (2) Productivity through people - my

rubric is calidad through people, and (3) Value driven, a corporate value.

In the book, In Search of Excellence, Peters and Waterman describe what many of the corporations do to satisfy the needs of their customers. They have an obsession with the needs of their customers. The authors talk about the Catapillar Corporation, for example, the people who make those big earth moving tractors, who promise and deliver parts and service anywhere in the world within twenty-four hours. They talk about Proctor and Gamble, the people that make Tide and Pampers and many other products, who keep very close tabs on what the customer reaction is to their products. And the companies that are successful know what their customers need, they anticipate what their customers need, and then they design a service or product to meet the needs of their customers.

In the community colleges, our customers really are students and I need not tell you how diverse our students are. But let me describe the students in our District. The majority of students in the Maricopa County Community College District are women; about fifty-five percent of them are women. Many of them are returning women, women in their late twenties or early thirties, many of whom are single and head of a household. They have about 2.3 children. Most of the minorities in the state of Arizona are in the community colleges; this is also true in this state.

In Texas of all the Chicanos enrolled in public institutions of higher education, 60% are in the community colleges. In California that figure is closer to 80%. (9)

We also know that we have older students. That is the students are getting older and older. I went to a graduation last Thursday at one of our colleges--that is our college without walls--and the oldest person who graduated that night was only 81 years old. Would you believe? 81!!

The majority of our students in Maricopa County are part-time students. In fact, we have more students who take one 3 hour course than students who take 12 hours or more. Think of that. Sixty-six percent of our students take six hours or less and the majority of them are in occupational programs or courses that are designed to prepare them for work. The majority of our students work, in fact, 75% of our students work and 75% of those who work, work 40 hours or more a week.

Now the traditional approach to teaching and learning that many of us were trained to do doesn't fit. It doesn't work any more. Not when you have that kind of student population. So we need to define calidad in terms of the needs of our students. We need to have better definitions of what the needs of our students are and adjust our services and training for them in order to follow what excellent corporations in this country do.

The next characteristic of excellent corporations that is of significance to us is "productivity through people." My term is calidad through people. You can not have quality teaching in community colleges if you don't have quality faculty. Our faculty, generally speaking, are excellent faculty. I think that part of the problem that we have with the faculty, or better yet what the faculty have with us, is that the climate, the relationship between the faculty and the colleges is not the best that it can be. I won't talk too much about that, because I am sure that Don Rippey at noon will talk about this issue.

But I would just like to quote from Peters and Waterman about what excellent companies do with people. It is a very short paragraph. Here's what they say: (10)

"Treat people as adults. Treat them as partners. Treat them

with dignity. Treat them with respect. Treat them--and not capital spending and automation--as the primary source of productivity gains."

I say that if we are to improve the calidad of our teaching then we need to work much better with our faculty.

The third characteristic of an excellent company, companies that are significant to us here, is the notion of corporations being value driven. Throughout the book, Peters and Waterman talk about the culture of a corporation, the ethos of a corporation, the mythology and legends of a corporation, the beliefs of a corporation. I would like to quote from the book by Peters and Waterman where they quote Thomas Watson, Jr., who was the Chief Executive Officer for International Business Machines (IBM). And here is Mr. Watson talking: (11)

"Consider any great organization--one that has lasted over the years--I think that you will find that it owes its resiliency not to its form of organization or administrative skills, but to the power of what we call beliefs and the appeal these beliefs have for its people. This then is my thesis: I firmly believe that any organization, in order to survive and achieve success, must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all of its policies and actions. Next, I believe that the most important single factor in corporate success is faithful, adherence of these beliefs. And, finally, I believe if any organization is to meet the challenge of a changing world, it must be prepared to change everything about itself

except those beliefs as it moves through corporate life. In other words, the basic philosophy, spirit, and drive of an organization have far more to do with its relative achievements than do technological or economic resources, organizational structure, innovation, and timing. All of these things weigh heavily in success. But they are, I think, transcended by how strongly the people in the organization believe in the basic precepts and how faithfully they carry them out."

The corporations that practice these three main concepts, emphasize quality, emphasize closeness to the customer, emphasize working with people. Let me tell you a little bit about a bar of Ivory soap. Proctor and Gamble introduced the 99.4% pure soap at a time when one used to go to the corner grocery store and you would buy three cents or five cents or seven cents worth of soap, mostly lye. People would cut off a chunk and wrap it in a piece of newspaper and that was what was available. Proctor and Gamble came out with an individually wrapped bar of soap that was 99.4% pure and it floated. That quality 99.4% pure continues; and everywhere you go, everyone who uses Ivory Soap knows that the soap floats and it is pure. (12)

Here is a story that Tom Peters told at a seminar in Phoenix about two months ago that I was fortunate enough to attend. He was talking about the mythology of Proctor and Gamble as it emphasized the quality of its products. He told the story of a manufacuring plant manager who got a call at 10 one night from a salesman who was at a little cross-roads grocery store. He said, "We have a problem here. We have a bar of soap that is not 99.4% pure; it does not float. You better get yourself over here, and I want you here by

8:00 a.m. tomorrow the morning."

So the manager had to drive about 250 miles that night, so he could go and explain to the owner of the grocery store why that bar of soap did not float. That manager of the manufacuring plant said, "You know, these people are serious about quality."

You know, I wonder how many times that happens in community colleges when a student complains about the lack of calidad.

I want to tell you a couple of stories about the mythology of the American Knitting Company, the company that manufactures Gold Toe socks--and if I could get my shoe off, I could show that I wear Gold Toe socks. I began buying them as soon as I could afford to buy them, because Gold Toe Socks are a little bit more expensive than the run of the mill one-size fit-all socks. The Gold Toe sock is available in San Antonio only at Joske's. They are available in only two stores in the greater Phoenix area. You go and you buy a pair of socks that fit your foot, the heel and the toe of the socks are reinforced and I have never, never had a Gold Toe sock wear out in the heel or in the toe. It is worth the 75 cents or $1.00 more per sock than I have to pay for other socks. The sock never loses its shape; it is always the way it is built. It is the highest quality men's sock made in this country. The mythology, the legends, of the American Knitting Company about the quality of the sock is incredible. And I commend you to read a couple of books about that corporation. To move to IBM....

IBM is known the world over but not for the currency of its technology. The people in IBM will agree that their technology is not the latest; in fact, they are usually two or three years behind in the technology. They just produce a better product that works, and beyond that they will come and service your hardware. If your software does work they will send a team of

people to you. We have had experiences with some of our IBM Personal Computers that our colleges own. When we have had one computer go down, five guys from IBM are there in two hours to fix it. There are stories over and over about the white shirt and the tie, the uniform that the IBM salesmen wear (they still do that, incidently). You are now allowed to wear a grey or light blue or maybe a beige shirt, but not when you are in corporate headquarters. You need to wear a white shirt if you are going to get ahead in IBM. All that is part of the culture, of the mythology, of the legends, of the beliefs of the corporation.

In community colleges at one time, we used to talk about our students and how proud we were of the fact that our students would come back to us during Thanksgiving or Christmas or Spring break and tell us how great the calidad of the teaching was in community colleges. I remember when I was working El Paso or in Laredo and we had students who came and talked to us about that. We used to write about that. We don't do that any more. My point is that if we are to improve community colleges we need to make calidad in teaching the corporate value of community colleges. We need to make that our corporate value.

Some of you will, who consider yourself realists or perhaps I would call you pessimists, will tell me that we really are too far along in our development for us to go back and instill a new corporate value at our institutions. Some of you will cite fiscal constraints. Others will tell me that our community colleges have decreasing enrollments. Some others will tell me that the relationships between administration and faculty are very bad because of unionization. Yet others will talk to me about the fact that we have a "greying" faculty already set in their ways.

But I think it has to be done. We need to

*Expect it.

*Demand it.

*Support it.

*Reward it.

*Dream it.

*Live it.

Now I want to go back to the three questions I told you at the beginning that I would try to answer, the three far-reaching, significant, over-arching questions related to calidad in teaching in community colleges.

The first questions was: What does a spindly-legged, hairless Chihauhau dog have to do with calidad in community college teaching?

The answer is: I don't know!

I just happen to like the story and people laugh every time I tell it.

However, if any of you do find any relationship, I do hope you will tell me.

The second question was: What should a bar of Ivory Soap, a pair of Gold Toe Socks, and an IBM personal computer have in common with teaching excellence in the community college?

The answer is: everything. You see, the bar of Ivory Soap, the Gold Toe Socks, and the IBM personal computer are just three of thousands of items which reflect the values,the culture, the mythology, the ethos of their corporations.

We in the community colleges need to make excellence in teaching our corporate value. The corporate value of community colleges.

The third question was: What the hell does si se puede mean anyway?

The answer is: Yes, it can be done.

The term si se puede in effect became the motto of Chicanos involved in the Chicano movement in the 1960s-1970s and its philosophy continues to this day to guide the work many of us are doing.

Si se puede means Yes, it can be done.

Yes, it can be done.

Muchas gracias.

FOOTNOTES

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8118 Math-Sciences Building
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024

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